

A JOHNSONIAN NEWS LETTER

Vol. III, No. 1 Address communications to J. L. Clifford
Lehigh University, Bethlehem, Penna.

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NEW FORMAT

As we begin our third year, we make a few physical changes in the make-up of the News Letter. Several subscribers have written about suggested improvements, some of which, unfortunately, seem impossible just at this time. But others do appear worthy of trial. For instance, W.E. Alderman (Miami U.) writes: "Might it not be desirable as a matter of economy to have it mimeographed on both sides? Practically all of the directives that come from the government these days are so printed. I know that the Letter would not seem to be as large as it now is if it contained only half the number of leaves. The number of pages, however, would be the same, and we would all understand."

Then H. S. Leach, Librarian of Lehigh Univ., adds: "I think your Johnsonian News Letter should be mimeographed on better paper, since I have no doubt that a good many libraries and perhaps individuals will wish to bind it. Also the binding margin seems to be rather narrow, and I think that a little more inner margin could be had by shifting the type so that the outer margin was narrower."

Do you all approve of these changes? If not, let us know.

M.L.A. CANCELLATION

Many of our readers must have been as disappointed as your editor over the cancellation of the M.L.A. meetings last December. And yet obviously postponement was the wise and patriotic thing to do. Moreover, it must have come as something of a relief to those at a great distance who were lamenting the fact that they would have to miss the first meeting in years.

Now all of us are on an equal footing in regretting the loss of friendly get-togethers, scholarly conversations, and stimulating papers. Concerning the latter we in English VIII have suffered a real loss, for even if we do say it ourselves the All-Johnson program with papers by Krutch, McAdam and Bronson was something to make any good 18th century scholar's mouth water.

Perhaps someday we may be able to have our program anyway, at a time when everyone can come. We hope so.

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MEMBERS IN SERVICE

Our former chairman, Pete Jones (West. Res.), has just been commissioned a Captain in the U.S. Army, and will be stationed at the Language School at Savage Minn., where he will devote his time to the study of Japanese. Why not a Word Study book for the Nipponese, filled with sound democratic principles?

Lieut. R.P. Bond, U.S.N.R., is now officer in charge at the Naval Flight Preparation School at the Univ. of Virginia in Charlottesville. He writes: "This is quite a job -- getting hundreds of Cadets started in the aviation training. I get farther and farther from English literature."

Lieut. Ned McAdam is now at the Pre-Flight School at Monmouth, Ill.

F.W. Hilles (Yale) is now a Captain in the army, acting as pilot interviewer.

Lieut. Phil Gove, who has been at the Naval Training School at Ohio State University, is now in California. He may be reached, care FARU, Fleet Air Wing 14, Fleet Postmaster, San Diego, Calif. He writes that he is very busy, day after day, and adds: "I do think once in a while of something that happened in the eighteenth century, but the only outward sign of my former life is a little card I have with me with the names and editions of the 18th century dictionaries I've so far collected -- just in case I someday somewhere see another one for sale and can't recall whether I own it or not." We hope in Australia, Manila, or Tokyo, he will find some of those longed-for editions.

John Arthos (Mich.) has entered the army as a VOC, and his address is 2-B-59, Camp Wolters, Texas. Just before leaving academic life he had completed a book having to do with the influence of science on the poetic diction of the neo-classic period.

Arthur Friedman is teaching at the Meteorological Institute of the Univ. of Chicago, where he will give a special humanities course to enlisted men.

Maury Quinlan (St. Joseph), author of a very interesting book, Victorian Prelude, which traces among other things the rise of prudery in 18th century England, is now in the Headquarters Co., 100th Infantry, Fort Jackson, S.C. He comments that "the army is no more dull than various M.L.A. meetings I've attended, but it's no place for research." It all depends on what kind of research!

The Walpole Correspondence has now lost Ass't Editor George Lam, who is receiving technical education with Company C, 1st Signal Training Regiment, Fort Monmouth, N. J.

G. S. Alleman (Lehigh), who last year brought out a work on Matrimonial Law and Restoration Comedy, is now in the 841st Engineer Aviation Battalion, stationed at Leesburg, Florida. The last we heard from him he was sitting under the Spanish moss and palm trees reading Suetonius and T. S. Eliot.

G.P. Winship, Jr. (N.C.) is in the Army Signal Corps at Warrenton, Va.

Bill Sloane (Russell Sage), after several months as a Sergeant in an Infantry regiment at Fort Meade, Maryland, is now at the Officer Candidate School, Fort Benning, Ga.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

C.H. Bennett (Yale), co-editor with F. A. Pottle of Boswell's Tour to the Hebrides, is now associated with W. S. Lewis as one of the co-editors of the Yale Walpole edition.

Dick Boys (Mich.) writes that he and Art Mizener (Rochester) expect to have their first-line index of poetical miscellanies completed in the near future. He adds that the University of Michigan has bought numerous microfilms of volumes listed in Case but not in this country. Boys adds: "We now have access to almost all of the miscellanies in the first half of the 18th century. Of course there are a fair number of new items which are neither in Case nor in this country. Copies of these microfilms can be obtained from University Microfilms, First St., Ann Arbor, Mich. Or I would be glad to give further information to anyone desiring it."

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NEW PUBLICATIONS

In 1939 Hoxie Fairchild (Hunter) brought out the first volume of a great critical work entitled Religious Trends in English Poetry. In the Preface he stated that the materials for the next volume were in his files and that the work might be expected in two or three years. And just as predicted, the survey of the years 1740-80 appeared last fall. Certainly every John-sonian will wish to examine it carefully, even though the Doctor's own verse, together with that of other writers who are essentially prosemen, is not considered at all.

But here we may find the most thorough and penetrating study yet made of a multitude of minor worthies and most of the major poets of the period. Perhaps the most interesting chapter, "Four Christian Poets", analyzes the work of Young, Byrom, Smart and Cowper.

Though Fairchild was so accurate in predicting the exact time of the appearance of his second volume, we hope that his estimate of six or seven years before the next is exaggerated.

Who was Stella? What exactly were her relations with Swift? Was she his wife, half-sister, niece, or merely platonic friend? Every one of us at times must have longed to have the answer to this tantalizing mystery surrounding her connection with the Dean. And every one of us must have secretly hoped that Herbert Davis (Smith) in his little volume, Stella, recently published, would somehow settle the matter one way or another. But alas! he, too, leaves the problem where it was; in fact, he gingerly skirts the marriage issue altogether. On the other hand, he does demolish rather thoroughly the newest theory regarding Swift's paternity--that recently proposed by Denis Johnston.

But what chiefly interested one reader, at least, is Davis's astute comparison of the give-and-take between Swift and his ladies with the

world of high comedy. As Davis so admirably puts it: "This is the very triumph of the comic spirit, the product of wit and urbanity; here is the wisdom that will not strive or cry, but in its own way is able to make strife and anger contemptible. And here, on the other hand, are the positive virtues of kindness and patience and understanding, by the exercise of which in a civilized society men and women may live together in mutual esteem, and cultivate the delights of friendship."

Far too often many of us think of Swift only as a savage, bitter, thwarted man and forget the softer elements in his nature. Certainly this delightful little volume will come as a much needed corrective.

Just as we are going to press (or what does one call preparing mimeograph stencils?), we have received a copy of Ernest Mossner's (Syracuse) The Forgotten Hume. In a later issue we hope to have something more to say about this work; but in the meantime, as we have said elsewhere, we think every one of our readers, whether he agrees wholeheartedly with all of Mossner's main contentions or not, owes it to himself to read this provocative estimate of Le bon David.

Another publication just arrived, and one which some of our members may not yet have seen, is J. R. Moore's (Indiana) Defoe's Sources for Robert Drury's Journal. This brochure, No. 9 of the Humanities Series of the Indiana Univ. Publications, may be secured from the University Bookstore in Bloomington, Indiana.

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W.I.P.--1942

Certainly one of the most welcome presents to scholars in this country is the 1942 issue of Work in Progress. This number, like the one in 1939, is complete in itself

and lists all research topics ever reported, except those definitely known to have been completed or discontinued.

Again a valuable feature of the present issue is the superb index, with its general entries listing such categories as anthologies, bibliographies, biographies, and histories of literature in preparation. At a glance it is possible to see all the work reported in each category.

So a thousand congratulations to Jim Osborn! Frankly, we wonder if very many of us appreciate what he has done singlehanded for scholarship. For years people kept repeating how valuable it would be if only some clearing-house for information about work in progress could be set up; and yet nothing at all was done. Then along came Jim, with vision and energy, and, what was even more important, dogged determination. The result you all know -- one of the most useful tools for research scholars the world over. And now having used it, we realize that we can never again do without it.

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NEWS FROM ENGLAND

Two letters recently received show so well what scholarly Englishmen are thinking that we cannot refrain from quoting from them at some length.

Early in the autumn E. S. de Beer wrote from London that he was, like so many other of his countrymen just now, giving much of his time to reading books on American history (You may remember that R. W. Chapman has just edited a volume by the late George Gordon on Anglo-American Literary Relations). He added that he had just completed a recent life of Washington and commented: "I am beginning to get hold of a few outlines, but do not know the various incidents properly. With Washington the difficulty seems to be to trim between hagiography, which I dislike, and debunking, which I detest. The better

English writers are not much helped because while their judgement is fairly good they haven't enough sympathetic imagination to grasp the significance of incidents from the American point of view.

He had just been seeing something of London theatrical gaiety -- "two reviews in a week", and "Mr. Falk - who is a Czechoslovak as Othello; and a miscellaneous horde on the stage with him demonstrating that while he could act they couldn't."

Then he adds: "One of the minor pleasures of wartime London is the weeds on vacant sites, either where houses have been destroyed by raids or where building has been held up for the duration. Especially the willow herb, a tall and handsome plant with bright reddish purple flowers, making where it grows thick a bright patch of colour; various kinds of thistles and milk-thistles; and the docks, with their rust coloured spires. One vacant site has beyond it the trees in the garden of a small square, with the buildings showing through them; ramshackle, but a pleasant memorial of the early nineteenth century; they are alas unlikely to survive long after the war as the site belongs to the University of London.

"The EWS tanks--Emergency Water Supply, occupying the cellar areas of destroyed houses -- also have their charms; one sees the surrounding architecture reflected in them; generally deplorable architecture; but if the light is suitable and conditions favourable, sometimes picturesque or pleasantly melancholy. One would prefer not to have such things; but if one has to live with them one may as well make the best of them.

"The National Gallery exhibits one old master a month -- one picture; and generally good ones. But it also shows one or two new acquisitions if not too precious and easily moved. So at present there are a not quite Giotto, good, but not the real thing; Giovanni Bellini's Agony in the Garden; and a picture by Panini of the interior of St. Peter's at Rome. ..."

An Air Mail letter from Kenneth Sisam (O.U.P.) in Oxford, written as late as the middle of January, comments again on the unaltered morale of the people, despite years of shabby and pinched lives. Again we quote at length:

"I marvel more and more at their patience under all kinds of temper-breaking shortages, restrictions, exhortations and criticisms. We waste endless time waiting for transport for the most necessary purposes. One day last week I arrived at the bus terminus 25 minutes early, and found, by my experience of queues, that I would just about get into the bus: that would be at least 20 hours of people's time lost, when any one of us would be fined for throwing away the tiny shred of paper that now makes a bus ticket; and there were other queues all around. There we stood in the wind and rain without any shelter, until the bus came in. It seemed an endless time before the passengers got out; a thin, tight-lipped woman of middle age stood resolutely on its back platform, blocking the way of all the other passengers and indifferent to our grumbling. The conductress, jammed at the inner end of the bus, was trying to push her way through to effect a clearance. When she arrived, the problem was solved: the lady had got on late and, in the crush, had not bought her 1st ticket. She was adamant in the good rule that one does not descend from a bus without paying the fare.

"We got aboard, and it was plain that a good deal of the queue would be left behind for another hour. Some excess passengers tried to shrink and look as small as possible, for a wet night was coming on; but the conductress said she had ten too many. One might have expected some protest, but the ten shuffled off without a murmur, and I heard one of them say consolingly that at least they would be at the head of the next queue. This is England, unchanged.

"One gets home, well chilled, to hear a voice on the wireless, purring like a cat over cream, with the good advice that it saves fuel to eat vegetables raw; and another commending potatoes for breakfast to people who can hardly look another potato in the face. One opens *The Times* to find the heading "An Urgent Call to Britain":—there has been a cyclone in Bengal and the damage must be made good by public subscription. Indeed there are Urgent Calls from most parts of the world for men, ships, aeroplanes, tanks, munitions, clothes, food, money, even books, with not very polite remarks about the negligence, inefficiency, selfishness, etc. of an England that can no longer supply them all.

"You will observe that my thoughts are coloured by mid-winter and the black-out, and perhaps still more by the atrocious weather which month after month has held up the bombing of Germany; but I report them as a fore-taste of what you will have to get used to in the United States as the war goes on..." (Your editor can't help wondering if we will be able to bear such privations in this country as equably.)

Sisam adds some news of scholarly work. "Very little writing is being done except by the veterans: E. K. Chambers (now 77) has just finished the MS of a book on fifteenth century literature, and is looking round for a few odds and ends to occupy his leisure; de Selincourt, a mere 72, goes on quietly with his edition of Wordsworth's poems; and Greg has just done an admirable book on the Editorial Problem in Shakespeare -- I suppose the best piece of work on the technical side of textual criticism that has been done for English, though it indicates some reluctant doubts about the copy-text principle which will, I think, continue to grow....

"The Johnsonians in Oxford, Chapman and Powell and Nichol Smith, are all well...."

We are very sorry to announce the death in November of Frederick Vernon, the Hon. Secretary and Co-Founder of the Johnson Society of London. News of his passing has come in several recent letters, and we wish to express again, as in a former issue of the News Letter, our deep appreciation for all he has done for Johnsonian interest in England.

A. Lloyd-Jones, Treasurer of the Society, wrote on 23 November: "He was happy in peaceful retirement in the Cotswolds and passed away suddenly and peacefully. His last year however was shadowed by absence of any news of one of his sons in Malaya who was in the (civilian) retreat to Singapore since when no news has come about his whereabouts".

After the bombing of his home near London, Vernon had been living in a little cottage near Oxford, which he often visited, and never failed to drop in at the Taylorian for a chat about Johnson with L.F. Powell. As Powell puts it, Vernon was not a scholar, but he was eager always to be "rightly informed and willing to learn anything about Johnson. His interest in the London Society remained up to the end." He was a kindly man, devoted to his hobby, and with a continued friendly interest in all other Johnsonians the world over.

Lloyd-Jones also tells of a meeting of the London Society on November 21, at which he read a short paper by your editor. He adds that the Society has been "going strong", in fact that it had been holding "most successful meetings regularly and if the present lull in air attacks continues we anticipate still more successful activities...."

"St. Clement Danes Church is of course still a shell -- the walls and tower only -- but we all hope it will be rebuilt."

H.W. Bromhead writes from Streatham that he has nearly finished the second volume of *Thraliana*, which he has found "most fascinating,

except for Mrs. Thrale's poetry, which I find boring (others will agree about the poetry, we suspect). I am impressed by the learned care and thoroughness with which it has been edited. I don't wonder Miss K. B. took several years over it. She certainly deserves my humble congratulations, for she has made it easier for everyone going over the same ground, or interested in the same subject." To this last we reiterate our hearty agreement.

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Bob Metzdorf (Rochester) writes that his bibliography of editions of *Rasselas* is progressing well. In fact, editions are still coming in at such a rate that he has not been able to devise any permanent arrangement of the issues.

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Amos Ettinger, of the History Dept. of Lehigh Univ., is actively at work on a detailed chronology of the life of Dr. Johnson. If any of our readers should chance to find information about Johnson's movements, not listed in the accepted authorities, Ettinger would greatly appreciate word concerning each reference.

Why spend valuable time on the chronology of a single individual? you may ask. Doesn't the Hill-Powell edition of Boswell furnish all we need to know about Johnson's whereabouts at any time during his life? The answer is that there are huge gaps in Boswell -- long periods of time about which we know a good deal, and about which Boswell knew practically nothing. Thus a complete record of Johnson's life will not readily be found in any edition of the Life.

But what will be the value of such a record? Certainly there are at least two values: as a reference tool for all Johnsonian research scholars, and as an aid in establishing the chronologies of his famous companions, Burke, Goldsmith, Garrick and others. If we establish where Johnson was, and with whom, we thus serve more than one purpose.